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Multum in parvo:

Sojourning Scots and the portrait miniature in colonial India, 1770s-1780s¹

The prevailing art history of the portrait miniature in later eighteenth-century Britain comprises two dominant narrative trajectories of authorship and affect; or taxonomy and tears. Much of the ~~early~~ literature devoted to this genre of portraiture by artists like Richard Cosway and John Smart favours the monograph format, being particularly directed towards art historians of Georgian and Regency taste and fashion, as well as collectors and the art market. ~~collectors of these precious masterpieces in little by artists like Richard Cosway and John Smart.~~ When their social function as objects rather than pocket- or locket-sized works of art is considered, they are typically written about as love tokens – situated in a culture of intimacy in which the portraits were exchanged between husband and wife as a material trace of marital relations. Like their better-documented oil on canvas counterparts, portrait miniatures are seen as mediating the absence/presence dialectic in offering a simulacrum of a loved one's face that was especially prized when the sitter-subject was not physically present. On the death of one half of the couple, the love token that was the portrait miniature soon became an object of mourning, commemorating the sitter in a separation that was irrevocable. According to Jean-Luc Nancy's useful critique: 'The portrait recalls presence in both senses of the word: it brings back from absence, and it renders in absence. As such, then, the portrait immortalizes; it renders immortal in death.'² The titles of two exhibitions specifically devoted to portrait miniatures: *Love and Loss*; *Secret Passion to Noble Fashion* provide a sense of the various histories that congregate around these objects – especially those on a register of emotion and to a lesser extent, fashion.³

This essay seeks to contribute another complementary reading to these existing art histories of portrait miniatures by framing these jewel-like objects within an imperial panorama. Here I am evoking contrasting art objects and notions of size and scale quite deliberately, to

¹ Acknowledgments..

² J.-L. Nancy, 'The Look of the Portrait', *Multiple Arts: The Muses II*, (Stanford, 2006), 235.

³ R. Jaffee Frank, *Love and Loss: American portrait and mourning miniatures*, (New Haven and London, 2000); A. Sumner and R. Walker, *Secret Passion to Noble Fashion: The world of the portrait miniature*, (Bath, 1999).

reinforce the notion that aesthetic size cannot be divorced from social function and social value.⁴ Prior to the recent work of Kristina Huneault, the narrative of empire had been largely absent from the history of the portrait miniature. As she wrote in 2013, they had been ‘rarely considered within the imagery of colonialism’.⁵ Huneault’s work focuses on miniature portraits in early nineteenth-century colonial Canada whose sitter-subjects were colonized by the British empire. She argues that such miniatures are transitional and transnational, ‘most eloquently a negotiation’ of the dialectic between self and other, connection and detachment.

My discussion subscribes to Huneault’s dialectics, especially those of connection and detachment, while reorienting our focus eastwards away from the new world in colonial Canada, to the inchoate British Empire in colonial India; and from representations of colonised individuals to the British colonizers, specifically to sojourning Scots whose portraits in miniature were produced in India in the 1770s and 1780s. It is well known that North Britons were disproportionately represented in the many professions that served ~~the British imperial project~~ the English East India Company in the India subcontinent.⁶ They repeatedly remark on it soon after their arrival: ‘You would be astonished to see the number of our countrymen that are here’, wrote William Yule of the Bengal army in a letter of the early 1780s to his brother Jamie.⁷ What follows, considers the social role of these diminutive objects in colonial India and in Scotland during the later eighteenth century in mapping consanguineal, rather than conjugal, relations; privileging their affective currency as a material memento to the living, a memento moveri rather than a memento mori to the dead.⁸ For Marcia Pointon in her formative essay on the importance of miniatures in English cultural history, the portrait miniature is a genre of artwork that exists on an axis between portrait

⁴ S. Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the collection*, (Durham N.C. and London, 1993), 95.

⁵ K. Huneault, ‘In miniature: Trauma and indigenous identity in Colonial Canada’, G. Pollock (ed.), *Visual Politics of Psychoanalysis: Art and the image in post-traumatic cultures*, (London and New York, 2013), 45. See too Huneault’s ‘Miniature paintings as transcultural objects? The John Norton and Peter Jones portraits’, J. Codell (ed.), *Transculturation in British Art, 1770-1930*, (Farnham, 2012), 39-57.

⁶ G. J. Bryant, ‘The Scots in India in the eighteenth century’, *Scottish Historical Review*, 64 (1985), 22-41; J. M. Mackenzie, ‘Empire and National Identities: The case of Scotland’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 8 (1998), 215-231.

⁷ British Library, Mss Eur E357/14/31.

⁸ A. Fennetaux, ‘Fashioning Death/Gendering sentiment: Mourning jewelry in Britain in the eighteenth century’, M. Daly Goggin and B. Fowkes Tobin (eds.), *Women and the material culture of death*, (Aldershot, 2013), 28.

painting and the pawnshop, the Royal Academy and the treasure hoard and the body and the vitrine.⁹ My essay seeks to identify alternative axes determined by the particularities of their colonial context which are variously geographical, temporal and social. On the one hand, there is a geographical axis, a horizon(tal) line concerned with distance and proximity; on another, a temporal axis, punctuating a precarious timeline between youth and maturity in marking certain rites of social passage, which were typically concerned with the coming of age of their unmarried male sitter-subjects.

This is not a lachrymose history of empire narrated via the portrait miniature – a narrative of geographical separation whose temporary nature was made permanent in death, so much as a material affirmation of life and liveliness. The commissioning of a portrait miniature in 1770s and 80s colonial India was, it will seek to demonstrate, a material pronouncement of survival, a coming of age, of social position and career promotion in a sub-continent that was geographically distant and physically dangerous, where the statistics for survival were intractably not in the colonizer's favour – at least not in the short term. 'when a man first comes into the country his chance of living the first month is 3 to one against him but afterward if [he] has any thing of a tolerable constitution his chance is very good', estimated Lieutenant William Baillie of the 89th Highland Regiment of Foot in his first letter written from India dated October 1760.¹⁰ Baillie's miniature portrait will be encountered in due course as one of two surviving material examples that have been identified in Scottish private collections. Previously unlisted and unpublished, they are testimony to the portrait miniature as the quintessential material object commissioned by [Scottish colonizers](#) employed in the military, civil and medical service in later eighteenth-century India; adding a hitherto overlooked dimension to the art histories of this genre of portraiture in which they are both works of art and objects of material culture.

Epistolary [Self-portraits](#)

Marcia Pointon has previously drawn attention to what she identifies as the symbiotic relationship between letters and portrait miniatures, where she suggests how miniatures are culturally related to, if not actually analogous to, letter writing, with the miniature as a kind

⁹ M. Pointon, '“Surrounded with Brilliants”: Miniature portraits in eighteenth-century England,' *Art Bulletin*, 83.1 (2001), 57.

¹⁰ 18 October 1760, at a camp before Pondicherry. NAS, GD128/1/1.

of autograph; the small portrait, a letter of introduction.¹¹ In a cultural history of empire, the relationship between letters and portrait miniatures afforded an alternative dynamic. Despite the flourishing of epistolary studies since [Patricia Meyer Spacks](#) described them in 1988 as a forgotten genre, no previous scholars have noticed that colonial correspondence, namely family letters from the Indian subcontinent, contain portraits.¹² These are often epistolary self-portraits of the author, or his consanguineal and career brothers from the tripartite regions of Scotland, the Highlands, Lowlands and Borders, during a period of (in Pointon's phrase) institutionalised separation.¹³ For example, on 5 March 1776, Robert Lindsay wrote an extended, seven-page, letter to his mother, Anne Lindsay, the Countess of Balcarres, from Dacca, where he worked in the civil line of the East India Company as an assistant to the Revenue chief. ~~Referring to her last letter which he had received on 4 February the previous year, he explains,~~

'According to your Directions [\[in her last letter which he had received on 4 February 1775\]](#) I will now proceed to give you that description of myself by which you may both form an opinion of what I am at present & what I may be hereafter. In primis I am about 5 feet 5½ inches high as I stand, every way both stouter & fatter than when you saw me last...I shou'd as we stile it, be reckoned a stout little fellow. I am as the French call it en bon point, rather inclining to be fat as otherwise however the exercise I take will I hope prevent it increasing. As to my address so much recommended by L^d Chesterfield it is much the same – I could wish it was more genteel, I study it perhaps too little were I to frequent the Company of Ladies now I might improve, but they are either so conceited or foolish that I do not admire their conversation which in this country is neither edifying or pleasant.'¹⁴

Lindsay's description of himself might be characterised as one such epistolary self-portrait at full-length, albeit one in corporeal outline, with an emphasis on his height and his expanding girth – the latter conforming to the stereotypical Nabobish physique as being over-fed and under-exercised - rather than on the topography of his face, which the material miniature privileges. When the Countess might have last seen her son, hence her request for a recent 'portrait' is unclear. At the time of its composition, he was twenty-two years old and he

¹¹ Pointon, (2001), 65-66.

¹² P. M. Spacks, 'Forgotten genres', *Modern Language Studies*, 18.1 (1988), 47-57.

¹³ Pointon, (2001), 67.

¹⁴ National Library of Scotland, Acc. 9796, 22/1/7.

implicitly characterises himself within the letter as a work-in-progress ('what I am at present & what I may be hereafter'). From his vertical and horizontal dimensions, his letter turns to the issue of his 'address' – affecting a shift from the individual corporeal body to the social one, which inevitably involves female company. His inimical description of the attitudes of colonial women in India is a familiar refrain in critique of colonial correspondence; additional complaints are cited below.

For now, Lindsay's epistolary self-portrait has a critical gendered dimension in terms of its masculine sitter-subject and its intended feminine recipient. It is actually provided following a directive in a letter previously received from his absent mother. This gendered axis, in which the sitter-subject of the portrait is an unmarried man and the recipient of the said portrait is a member of his consanguineal female kin, a mother or sister, is typical of the object biographies of portrait miniatures in the British empire in India, be they epistolary or material, projected or executed, despatched or discarded, surviving or lost. The ensuing narrative offers a series of art historical vignettes - focusing on a number of four unmarried young Scotsmen who sat for their commissioned their miniature portraits in different parts of the Indian subcontinent. Aside from their Scottishness, their career trajectories have little in common with the 'stars of the imperial firmament' mentioned by Linda Colley – men like John Campbell, the 4th Earl of Loudoun and Hector Munro.¹⁵ With one exception, their portraits Three of the four are known from their previously unpublished epistolary correspondence to have been specially commissioned ~~dispatched these portraits to their~~for female family members in Scotland as possessions to be cherished in their prolonged absences from home.

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Back in Lindsay's letter to his mother and Hhaving characterised himself as a work-in-progress, Lindsay sums up his epistolary self-portrait as follows:

'Thus to the best of my judgment have I given you as near a description of myself as in my Power if I have been rather partial you must recollect most of us have a better opinion of ourselves and of our abilities, than the world in general entertain of us, therefore you must make the proper allowance should my young lady before she engages to be my wife wish to

¹⁵ L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, (New Haven and London, 1992), 127.

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form a judgment of my character you may shew the above from which she may judge of the person she has to depend upon for a husband’.

As this section of the extended letter draws to its conclusion, Lindsay uses the occasion of delineating his portrait in words to project a future transition in his social status, from being an unmarried man to a married one. What in March 1776 is an epistolary self-portrait in a letter for his mother, becomes ~~a at some as yet unspecified time, a~~ character reference for a potential bride. Oil on canvas portraits have long been associated with rites of passage in a sitter’s life cycle, which often have a gendered dimension, in the transition from childhood to adolescence, from single to married, to parenthood and so on in a linear fashion. For Pointon ‘portraits provide a medium through which we may engage with temporality itself.’¹⁶ Portrait miniatures, be they material or, as in Lindsay’s case, epistolary, provided an opportunity for these young unmarried sojourning Scots in India to engage with their own temporality. Not only was mortality deliriously high in the context of colonial India; as we shall see imminently, the process of aging was also vastly accelerated, which has ramifications for the representational veracity of the portrait image.

Constitution/~~C~~omplexion

If colonial correspondence contains epistolary self-portraits, like that composed by Robert Lindsay for his mother in March 1776, then it also recounts prospectively and retrospectively sitting for a portrait miniature and its despatch to Scotland for receipt by the sitters’ absent female relatives. On 10 September 1775, Robert Bruce of the Bengal Artillery wrote affectionately to his sister, Margaret (Peggy) from Fort William:

‘I’m five feet eleven inches good measure in short I’m a stout, good soldier looking fellow, looks my dearest gives me now no trouble we have no fine young Ladies here whose hearts it wou’d be a pleasure to make some little impression upon, therefore it does not much signify what we are like, I have often intended to have got my Pickture drawn and to have sent it home to you, I believe it must do it this season.’¹⁷

Like his countryman Robert Lindsay in the letter to his mother previously cited, Bruce provides dimensions both precise and approximate regarding his height and width

¹⁶ M. Pointon, *Portrayal and the search for identity*, (London, 2013), 30.

¹⁷ NAS, GD152/213/2/4.

respectively. His truncated corporeal summary ('in short') may be a playful reference to his considerable elevation. Note how these bodily dimensions are immediately followed by mention of his physical appearance ('good soldier looking fellow') and his relative attractiveness to members of the opposite sex. This, he writes, is a moot point since 'we have no fine young Ladies here'. Having objectified himself, he announces a habitual intention whereby he would be further object-ified – in having his picture drawn for his sister. His resolution to sit for his picture 'this season' had been achieved a year later, when he wrote again to Peggy:

'I intend to send you a miniature Picture of my sweet countenance this season, it is reckoned an exceeding good likeness. Get the Professors profile taken off and they will make a pair of Bracelets to adorn my Peggies arms, a Philosopher on the right, and a Soldier on the left, two pretty opposite characters in life you will say, shou'd you meet with any of our young female friend, who approves of my Asiatic tawny face, I wish you wou'd enter into terms of accommodation with them, in the first place they must venture out to India for I shall never be able to settle matters with them, shou'd they think of staying 'till my return faith Peggie I begin to look on myself as an old fellow, and old Beaux's you know is not the thing for young Lasses.'¹⁸

Bruce's letter makes no reference to the identity of the artist responsible for producing his miniature portrait by September 1776. Such silence is in marked contrast to much of the traditional art historical literature on miniature painters in Britain, which adopts the monograph format to applauds their extraordinary technical virtuosity. He does praise it as an 'exceeding good likeness' and projects how his sister might wear the miniature, as one of a pair of portraits attached to bracelets, with that of their brother, John Bruce on her right arm and his, on her left. Bruce identifies their portraits by their contrasting professions, where he was serving in the military in India, their elder brother John was Professor of moral philosophy at the University of Edinburgh. His letter reminds us that portrait miniatures are composite objects in the sense that they are classified as paintings and decorative arts, or works of art and objects.¹⁹ They also formed part of larger objects including bracelets and as locket attached to chains which were worn on the female body as part of a corporeal culture

¹⁸ NAS, GD152/214/4/18.

¹⁹ Frank, (2000), 7.

of affective display. Like their commission and ownership which, in the colonial context of Company rule in the British ~~empire in the~~ East Indies, was gendered as male prerogative/female possession, so their concealment/visibility on the male/female body was similarly gendered.

While not advocating the use of visual culture as a transparent window onto social practice in the past, in the case of the wearing of miniatures it is a legitimate exercise as it is represented in female portraiture ~~—though not in its male equivalent—~~ in later eighteenth-century Britain. A number of examples proliferate and a selection has previously been illustrated by Pointon, including four showing the parure of Queen Charlotte.²⁰ A portrait of Anne Keppel, the Countess of Albemarle in a private collection in Scotland indicates the pendant portrait-as-bracelets arrangement that Robert Bruce's letter to his sister recommends (Figure 1). The image is a cropped copy of a portrait by Joshua Reynolds painted mainly in 1759, in which Keppel is shown without the miniature portraits on her wrists.²¹ In the later copy, the mature female sitter is shown winding thread, an activity known as knotting that enables her to position her hands quite deliberately in close proximity to each other. H~~er~~ ruffled sleeves are weighed down to reveal her upper arms and two oval portrait miniatures attached to bracelets fastened around her right and left wrists (detail of Figure 1) which seem to represent her deceased father and husband, both of whom are shown wearing military uniforms. The miniatures seem to represent on her right wrist, her father, Charles Lennox 1st Duke of Richmond and Lennox and an illegitimate child of Charles II, who died in 1723 and on her left wrist, her deceased husband, William Anne Keppel, the 2nd Earl of Albemarle. Both are wearing military uniform adorned with the Order of the Garter. As Grootenboer has written in relation to a pair of miniatures by Thomas Hazlehurst now in the Cleveland Museum of Art in which the wife represented in one oval wears the miniature portrait of her husband as represented in the other, Keppel's body becomes an exhibition space for her father's and husband's image.²² Her wrapped black shawl and her black lace tie worn over a scalloped cap indicate her widowed status; the portrait miniatures are also attached to black mourning

²⁰ Pointon, (2001), 48-71.

²¹ D. Mannings, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: A complete catalogue of his paintings*, (New Haven and London, 2000), no. 1035 & 1035a.

²² H. Grootenboer, *Treasuring the Gaze: Intimate Vision in late eighteenth-century eye miniatures*, (Chicago, 2012), 32-33.

ribbons. Oil on canvas representations of portrait miniatures, or portraits of portraits, show they could be worn individually or in pairs, as in the portrait of Keppel (Figure 1).

That miniatures needed to be fastened to chains or ribbons when worn next to the female body is demonstrated in a half-length portrait of Catherine ‘Kitty’ Hunter, Lady Clarke by Nathaniel Hone who worked in oil and in miniature, ~~that~~which is signed and dated 1780 on the reverse (Figure 2). Hone represents Hunter the mature woman seated holding a miniature portrait in her right hand that she wears as a locket on a chain around her neck. The portrait subject of the miniature is oriented horizontally facing the external viewer; the height of the miniature spanning the distance between her thumb and the first finger of her right hand (detail of Figure 2). The hand becomes ‘the measure of the miniature’, tying the sitters together in an unusually proximate encounter and an uncommon representation on canvas of the tactility of the encounter.²³ The sitter-subject of the miniature portrait within a portrait has not been identified, yet from the sitter not simply wearing it around her neck in her painted portrait, but holding it aloft in front of her heart and seemingly cradling the miniature in one hand of her loosely embracing arms, we can easily infer an intimate relationship between the two sitters. For Huneault ‘The physical tangibility so characteristic of the miniature portrait object is the constant companion of its affective resonance.’²⁴ What we see in Hone’s double portrait is the proximate constancy or the constant proximity offered by the portrait miniature. ‘the miniature projects an eternalized future-past upon the subject [writes Susan Stewart]; the miniature image consoles in its status as an “always there”.’²⁵

One of the limitations of recruiting examples of oil on canvas female portraits in a discussion of portrait miniatures commissioned in colonial India is that they reinforce the dominant art historical narratives of the genre in Britain. That is, of conjugal ties and objects of mourning, which this narrative seeks to nuance against a global panorama. With this caveat in mind, we return to familial correspondence from India. Having projected how his sister might wear his miniature portrait in a bracelet tied on her left wrist, Robert Bruce’s letter, much like that of

²³ Huneault, (2013), 54.

²⁴ K. Huneault, ‘Always there: Aboriginal people and the consolation of miniature portraiture in British North America’, T. Barringer, G. Quilley and D. Fordham (eds.), *Art and the British Empire*, (Manchester, 2007), 302.

²⁵ Stewart, (1993), 126.

Robert Lindsay to his mother already cited, shifts from a description of his individual portrait into mixed company, specifically female society as the sequential passage to matrimony. Bruce's letter relays that if any of their female friends in Edinburgh approves of his 'Asiatic tawny face', that Peggy should 'enter into terms of accommodation with them'. As in earlier recorded histories of the portrait miniature from the ~~sixteenth~~^{fourteenth} century, it becomes a material agent of royal protocol, in orchestrating marital unions between heads of state: Hans Holbein the younger's miniature of Anne of Cleves, painted at court at Dürer for Henry VIII in 1539 is a compelling example of a vellum miniature 4~~5~~^{4.5} mm diameter that led to such a match.²⁶ The reference to the darkened colour of his skin in Robert Bruce's letter ('tawny') is followed by a remark concerning his accelerated aging: 'I begin to look on myself as an Old fellow,' writes the twenty-two year old; a theme that he revisits seven years later in another letter to Peggy:

'My matrimonial scheme has been long, long ago laid aside I am not calculated for a married state...consider my rosy cheeks are gone, A sweet black copper complexion with a port bellie & spindle shanks, shall be no temptation to a buxom damsel & faith Peggie I am to old in all respects to marry any Gypsei for her own convenience. Therefore you have little chance of a sister. Why woman I have not a hair on my fore head. I am at heart 46 years older in constitution than the Professor, He will be a young gay dog when I cannot hear myself cough'.²⁷

Bruce aligns his confirmed status as a bachelor with his undesirable physical appearance, where his natural complexion or 'rosy cheeks' have been replaced by metallic ones; his body distorted into Nabobish caricature with a protruding stomach and skinny legs. If skin is fundamental in establishing identity, then the sallow complexions of East India company servants was an unstable boundary mark – situating them as hybrid beings against a monochrome imperial palette of white western 'selves' and black colonial 'others'.²⁸ Bruce's ludic reference to a union with a gypsy continues the race chromatic and colour thematic

²⁶ R. Strong, *Artists of the Tudor Court: The portrait miniature rediscovered, 1520-1620*, (London, 1983), no. 30.

²⁷ 1 February 1783. NAS, GD152/214/4/9.

²⁸ C. Benthien, *Skin: On the cultural border between self and the world*, (New York, 2002), 1 and 95; D. Coleman, 'Janet Schaw and the complexions of Empire', *Eighteenth-century studies*, 36.2 (2003), 172; M. Harrison, *Climates & Constitutions: Health, race, environment and British Imperialism in India, 1600-1850*, (Oxford, 1999), 84.

since their dark skin was part of what has been identified as ‘their innate gypsiness’.²⁹ For instance, in William Cowper’s contemporary poem *The Task* (1785), ‘a tawny skin/The vellum of the pedigree they [gypsies] claim’ is an especially evocative image given the associations between portrait miniatures and vellum in their early art history.

Temporality and Aging

What may be implicit in Bruce’s letter to his sister Peggy is not only a shared sallow complexion between himself and a putative gypsy bride, as also the relationship of gypsies to Western temporality. According to Katie Trumpener, this was one of ‘time banditry’.³⁰ In their literary representation, gypsies were, she argues, increasingly reduced to a textual effect; their chronotype exerting a decisive power over the temporal cohesion of the text itself. In 1783, the unmarried Robert Bruce was 29 years old; his brother John was a decade older, yet Robert reckoned his constitution, from his prolonged exposure to India, was some 46 years older than that of his brother in Edinburgh. That India accelerated the natural aging process was noted by more than one of these sojourning Scots. ‘Fifteen years in India is equal to twenty-five in Europe,’ calculated William Fraser in a letter to his father from Hansee dated 2 September 1817.³¹ In contrast with the history of childhood, little has been published on that of old age, although there is some consensus that the age of 60 is usually associated with its onset. Historians have rightly observed that the meaning of old age is not fixed – it has different meanings in different contexts, as we see in Robert Bruce accelerating his age in a letter from Bengal of February 1783 from an actual 29 to the antiquated constitution of an octogenarian.³² The Earl of Minto, Governor-General of India, was designated old in calendar years (he was in his early 60s) when he wrote to his wife, late in 1811, explaining why he had ‘fallen lately so far short of my former voluminous correspondence...the honest truth is that I

²⁹ S. Houghton-Walker, *Representations of the Gypsy in the Romantic period*, (Oxford, 2014), 121 n. 91.

³⁰ K. Trumpener, ‘The Time of the Gypsies: A “People without History” in the Narratives of the West’, K. A. Appiah and H. L. Gates Jr. (eds.), *Identities*, (Chicago and London, 1995), 364.

³¹ NRAS 2696, bundle 14.

³² P. Johnson, ‘Historical readings of old age and aging’, P. Johnson and P. Thane (eds.), *Old Age from Antiquity to post-modernity*, (London, 1998), 1-18; P. Thane, *Old Age in English history: Past experience, present issues*, (Oxford, 2000), esp. 1-16; S. R. Ottaway, *The Decline of Life: Old age in eighteenth-century England*, (Cambridge, 2004).

am older every birthday, which is very common in the East'.³³ Previously he had written to her 'I am actually counting days, with all the exactness of a clock.'³⁴

Moirá Donald's work on clocks and watches in the early modern period had established the extent to which they were gendered objects, being associated primarily with male use and possession.³⁵ Although she concedes that it is difficult to establish what differentiates a clock from a watch, her contention that watches were designed for the male wardrobe since only men needed to carry the time around with them is especially pertinent to the male-dominated colonial population in Asiatic exile which Donald does not look at. In India, where as we have seen, time was speeded up at least as far as an aging constitution was concerned, such portable time keepers were among the requisite artefacts of masculine material culture variously gifted, despatched and ordered from Britain. For instance, on 14 January 1773, the Scot Alexander Callander, wrote to a correspondent asking for a good handsome gold watch from the most eminent watchmaker in London to be sent to him in the Bombay Presidency.³⁶ A year later, his brother John despatched a double cased dumb repeating gold watch – dumb repeating 'as being most usefull in your part of the Glob' - engraved with the cypher AC on the back, 'as it is quite the fashionable thing [he wrote], & may be the means of preventing any mistake or exchange.'³⁷ The emphasis on the requisite fashionability of Callander's watch is striking (unlike the dumb repeater), notwithstanding his geographical distance from the metropolis where such measures were dictated.

Like portrait miniatures in their appendage to the bodies of their female owners (Figures 1 & 2), pocket watches were attached to the clothed male body by means of chains and ribbons. They sometimes bore the proprietorial markings of their possessors as in. ~~In a Scottish private collection is~~ a gold-cased London watch measuring 50 x 40 mm (Figure 3). The reverse is -engraved ~~on the reverse with fr~~ from the top with the family motto AD FINEM

³³ *Lord Minto in India: Life and letters of Gilbert Elliot, first Earl of Minto from 1807 to 1814, while Governor-General of India*, (London, 1874), 332.

³⁴ 20 December 1809. *Lord Minto in India* (1874), 229.

³⁵ M. Donald, '“The greatest necessity for every rank of Men”: Gender, clocks and watches', M. Donald and L. Hurcombe (eds.), *Gender and Material culture in historical perspective*, (Basingstoke, 2000), 54-75.

³⁶ NRAS 2953, bundle 233; 14 September 1774, NRAS 2953, bundle 179.

³⁷ NRAS 2953, bundle 245.

SPERO 'I hope to the last', their armorial crest, consisting of the profile head of a tarbert facing left and with the cypher TEO in a V-shaped cartouche of foliage, the initials of Thomas Elliot Ogilvie who owned the watch. The engraved motto and insignia ornamenting the case of Ogilvie's pocket watch echo the designs John Stewart, a surgeon in the Artillery at Fort William, wanted incised on a pair of seals. He wrote to his elder brother William from Calcutta on 11 March 1789 enquiring if there were any good lapidarys in Edinburgh as 'I wish much to get a couple of seals cut one with my arms in full & the other with the crest [a naked forearm grasping a dagger] & motto [DEO JUVANTE VINCO] & on them my cypher [Figure 4]. Will you get this done for me as soon as possible & whatever the cost is. I wish them to be elegant as they can be made I suppose 5 or 6 guineas each will pay for them, but give more if necessary.'³⁸ Often made of hard stone and in precious materials, the imprint of a seal in wax 'sealed' a letter or a document as 'testimony to the personal presence or agency of an individual...it was therefore equivalent to a signature.'³⁹

When Lieutenant Colonel William Baillie died a prisoner in the fortress of Seringapatam in November 1782, the objects that were found in a shell snuff box belonging to him included a small diamond ring, a silver breast buckle, a 'cornelian seal sett in gold in the eastern style cut in Persian characters', a pair of tunic sleeve buttons 'and one miniature picture of an Officer, sett in gold in the style of a bracelet [Figure 5]. We think it is the Colonel's own Picture.'⁴⁰ Measuring 38 by 32 mm, this portrait is miniature, even by the diminutive standards of its genre. Executed in watercolour on ivory, it shows Baillie's head and shoulders, the sitter wearing the uniform of the European infantry regiment of the Madras army with a gorget and two epaulettes, one overlaid by a sash. His face is shown in a three-quarter view to the right. His dark hair is worn tied back by a black ribbon and he has large green eyes, dark bushy eyebrows, a small mouth and a slight double chin that meets his high collar. ~~The background is plain.~~ The identity of the artist responsible for the miniature and the date of its execution are unknown. We know that Baillie had been in service in India since October 1760 when he was twenty-one years old, initially with the Highland Regiment and from 1764, with the East India Company military forces. He died aged forty-three in 1782,

³⁸ NRAS 2656/2/Box 1/bundle 1.

³⁹ Pointon, (2013), 114.

⁴⁰ Fort William, 24 July 1783. John Ferguson and William Pope, solicitors, to John Baillie. NAS, GD128/4/3/42.

having been imprisoned for two years prior to his death. His portrait, along with other miniature objects including a ring, seal and buttons, formed part of the portable possessions and intimate apparel of this Scot serving in the military branch in colonial India for over twenty years. ~~Mobile and detachable, they were sometimes attached to the male body by chains and ribbons or as here, treasured in a pocket sized container, a snuff box.~~ These types of objects feature prominently in the wills composed by Scots in India, where they are bequeathed to those male friends serving and sojourning with them in the event of their deaths. As in a will dated 29 October 1787 where one Patrick Pringle bequeaths his gold watch to a Mr. Ferguson his Assistant surgeon.⁴¹

~~In a letter dated 2 March 1777, Patrick~~ Pringle's brother Alexander, who was Assistant at Masulipatam wrote to their mother in a letter dated 2 March 1777, as follows: 'I am now to tell you that a Painter having called at Vizagapatam by accident in his way to Bengal Pate [Patrick] got his Picture drawn it came to my hands the other day I have sent it on to Madras'.⁴² Three of Mrs. Pringle's Scottish sons were in service in late eighteenth-century India, as were successive generations of male family members into the nineteenth century. Patrick's portrait, an opportunistic commission by an unknown artist, rather than one by prearranged appointment, was never forwarded to their mother. Two years later, Alexander informed her 'Pates Picture never was sent, it was thought so ill done and so bad a likeness as not to be worth the trouble of carriage'.⁴³ Elsewhere, the subject matter of Alexander's letters to his mother revisit issues that are (by now) familiar tropes in colonial correspondence composed by young men in India to their female family members back home in Scotland. These include his aging countenance and his unmarried status. As in Robert Bruce's correspondence from the earlier 1770s, these are figured as being interrelated to his disadvantage regarding his physical unattractiveness as a potential husband. For instance, in a letter dated 9 September 1777, to his mother, he felt 'myself rather advanced in years...I fear the young Ladies may conceive me far from a chicken with hair partly grey a thin meagre person and sunburnt weather beaten countenance but such must be looked for in a man who has not been all his life nursed in fortunes lap, but with much wooing got her at last to smile

⁴¹ Patrick Pringle, Madras Wills, 29 October 1787, BL, IOR/L/AG/34/29/190, 107.

⁴² NAS, GD246/46/1.

⁴³ 6 March 1779. NAS, GD246/46/2.

upon him.’⁴⁴ These young men far from home were busy wooing ~~F~~Fortune in the form of socio-economic advancement. ~~That~~ This alternative courtship ~~took took~~ precedence over that of young women was especially pronounced in colonial India where the émigré female population was roundly criticised. According to Robert Lindsay, the women ‘are either so conceited or foolish that I do not admire their conversation which in this country is neither edifying or pleasant.’; a view endorsed by David Wedderburn in a letter to his sister: ‘You have not a conception of any thing so fâde, so bête, so perfectly ennuyante, as the conversation of that motley class of beings, that stile themselves, the modest women of Bombay.’⁴⁵ Wedderburn’s adoption of fashionable French parlance seeks to demonstrate his own learned cosmopolitanism in contradistinction to the paucity of education provided to these incoming ‘female fortune hunters’, as they were dubbed by William Fairlie in a letter to his sister Margaret from Calcutta.⁴⁶ What characterises the many accounts of these young women is their extraordinary socio-economic apotheosis, where on leaving Britain, they found themselves elevated from behind the counter in Milliners’ shops in the less salubrious parts of the metropolis. Equally characteristic by their absence rather than their presence is what these familial letters do not say about the relationships of colonial men with native women.⁴⁷ ‘I am of a very domestick turn [Alexander Pringle wrote to his mother on 6 March 1779], and some times think I could make a very sober decent kind of married man, tho’ I am resolved not to try the experiment on this side the water.’⁴⁸

‘Always mention any young men you know that have friends in this country [James Yule wrote from Edinburgh to his brother William, on 18 June 1782] – its amazing how many have been making enquiry at me if you had mentioned any of their friends in it easy done but gives great satisfaction.’⁴⁹ The young, male-dominated company in the ‘Indian Quarter’, as it was sometimes dubbed, on one side of the water was echoed on the other side in Scotland by a mixed group of family and friends, always anxious for news about their loved ones and waiting for the next packet of correspondence to arrive. Each of Alexander Pringle’s letters to

⁴⁴ NAS, GD246/46/1.

⁴⁵ Bombay, 31 December 1771. NAS, GD164/1689/5.

⁴⁶ 12 October 1781. NRAS, 905/11.

⁴⁷ D. Ghosh, *Sex and the family in colonial India: The making of empire*, (Cambridge, 2006), 1.

⁴⁸ NAS, GD246/46/2.

⁴⁹ British Library, Mss Eur E357/2/31.

his mother contain updates on the social circumstances of his Scottish contemporaries who he encountered in India, notably those from the Borders region where they grew up together. On 26 August 1776, for instance, he recounts ‘Tom Ogilvie is well so are Hamilton Russell & Haliburton I suppose they all write their Friends by this ship but its as well just to mention them.’⁵⁰ Two years later, Pringle explains how Ogilvie, who was paymaster at Vellore from 1770-1786 had been promoted thanks to the influence of Gilbert Pasley, the Surgeon-General of the Madras Presidency; and by June 1782 he writes that Pasley’s widow, Hannah ‘had displayed a strong inclination in Tom’s favor’. Pringle’s letter continues,

‘she will I dare say not escape censure in your part of the World for thinking of a second marriage so soon after Mr P__s death, it being only 7 months yet but you should not form a judgment entirely by your own rules of propriety, great allowance is to be made for the customs of a country and in India people are much more relax in their notions of these matters than at home, and all are guided, at least the generality, by these sentiments without incurring any blame on that account. Where this is the case, it is surprising inclination should prevail over the slender remains of prejudices we have imbibed in our younger years.’⁵¹

In this part of the letter to his mother, Pringle articulates an essential difference between society in colonial India and its equivalent in contemporary Britain, where the stringent social codes that dictated polite behaviour were seen as being much more relaxed in the latter than at home. Pringle’s letter additionally provides an evocative sense of the passing of time in the reference to ‘the slender remains of prejudices we have imbibed in our younger years’. He and so many of his young male contemporaries came of age in India. Often passing from what we know as adolescence into manhood, in a rite of passage summarily marked by the commissioning of a portrait miniature for their closet surviving female family members in Scotland.

The anachronistic use of the term adolescence requires some explanation. [Sara Suleri uses it in her account of Burke’s speech on Fox’s East India Bill, where the ‘youthfulness of colonialism, its availability to the mythmaking of adolescent adventure, remains a central](#)

⁵⁰ NAS, GD246/46/1.

⁵¹ 6 June 1782. NAS, GD246/46/3.

~~figure in the rhetoric of English India’.⁵², since a~~ Yet as a concept it did not exist before the last two decades of the nineteenth century, when it was ‘discovered’ in America as an idea and the social phenomenon to which it was a response.⁵³ Spacks’s formative and yet to be superseded 1982 study notes that if adolescence as an observable stage of life has a long history, then as a distinct idea, it has a short one.⁵⁴ ~~Suleri uses it in her account of Burke’s speech on Fox’s East India Bill, where the ‘youthfulness of colonialism, its availability to the mythmaking of adolescent adventure, remains a central figure in the rhetoric of English India’.⁵⁵~~—The second part of Spacks’s conveniently vague definition – that adolescence designates the time of life when the individual has developed full sexual capacity but has not yet assumed a full adult role in society – is seemingly endorsed by a letter from Alexander Pringle to Mrs. Pasley, dated 26 January 1778: ‘I think may pronounce myself in the high road to that Independency of fortune I have struggled so hard to attain ever since I was launched out in the world, which you know was at an early period of life, perhaps sooner than you look for.’⁵⁶ What ~~Spacks designates as is designated as~~ ‘a full adult role in society’ may be understood in the colonial context of late eighteenth-century India as being economically independent. Such concepts are weightily gendered in the period under discussion: ‘Because in adolescence men and women alike typically confirm their sexual roles [explains Spacks], writings about the young often convey with particular sharpness, the dichotomies and inequalities between male and female experience.’⁵⁷ These gender inequalities were not confined to adolescence ~~however~~: we witness an example in the projected criticism of Hannah Pasley for the rapidity of her second marital union, when no ~~equivalent such invective~~ would be directed towards her new husband, Thomas Ogilvie.

In the letter to his mother ~~of dated~~ June 1782, Alexander Pringle writes of ‘the slender remains of prejudice we have imbibed in our younger years’. Regarding what he and his Scottish contemporaries might imbibe as adults having come of age in India, ~~Elizabeth Collingham’s~~ account of the physical experience of the Raj recounts a process of assimilation

⁵² S. Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India*, (Chicago and London, 1992), 32.

⁵³ J. Demos and V. Demos, ‘Adolescence in historical perspective’, *Journal of marriage and the family*, 31.4 (1969), 632.

⁵⁴ P. M. Spacks, *The Adolescent Idea: Myths of use and the adult imagination*, (London, 1982), 7.

⁵⁵ ~~S. Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India*, (Chicago and London, 1992), 32.~~

⁵⁶ Spacks, (1982), 7; NAS, GD246/46/3.

⁵⁷ Spacks, (1982), 18.

whereby ‘a dose of the exotic might become an infection rather than an inoculation...the adaptation of the European constitution to the Indian climate could be interpreted as a process of degeneration into a state of physical miscegenation.’⁵⁸ The simultaneous adaptation of the European complexion to the Indian tropical climate was visibly manifest in the discolouration of the skin, from natural white to sallow tawny, prematurely aged and thought to be not attractive to the opposite sex. Yet as one of Pringle’s letters previously noted, he and his male contemporaries were too busy courting fortune in the Indian subcontinent to pursue the social ‘experiment’ that was matrimony, especially where the quality of the colonial women was reckoned as impoverished as their manners. Soon after arriving in India, John Baillie, one of William’s younger brothers wrote to their father from Vellore of the socio-economic possibilities it afforded: ‘it is the best in the world for a young man who has nothing to depend upon as he is sure if he behaves himself properly to get what comes that is baring the great accident which every man is liable too. And I assure you the risk of that is quite trifling to what is look’d on at home.’⁵⁹ Baillie’s letter alludes to an essential perspectival difference between mortality at home and in India; a difference mediated by the relative truths/fictions of proximity/distance.

Thomas Ogilvie, the owner of the gold-cased London watch (Figure 3) was An exception to the majority of unmarried bachelors with ‘nothing to depend upon’ - was Alexander Pringle’s friend from the Scottish Borders, Thomas Ogilvie, the owner of the gold-cased London watch (Figure 3).

He was

Ogilvie was nineteen years old when he started working with the East India Company civil service in 1770, when his father, William, wrote to him from Branseholm that December ‘My Boy, you are now launching out upon a broad World...you will find it has many turnings and wyndings’.⁶⁰ One such turn and wynd was his marriage in 1782 to Hannah Pasley, the widow of Gilbert Pasley, the former Surgeon-General of the Madras Presidency. The following year, Ogilvie’s mother wrote to her son that she had received his description of his wife who was

⁵⁸ E. M. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: The physical experience of the Raj, c. 1800-1947*, (Cambridge, 2001), 34.

⁵⁹ NAS, GD128/4/3/32.

⁶⁰ NRAS 162/5.

then pregnant. She praises her daughter-in-law for her 'smug smart looking face, with some expression, that sure is preferable to beauty, and if you regard the preservation of the latter, leave India as fast as possible as for certain liveing too long in so warm a climate does impair the looks'. While it has been long acknowledged that the tropical climate of India was injurious to the European constitution as regards their vulnerability to enervating diseases, to this we may now add that India was also damaging to the European complexion in terms of premature aging.

Colonial men, as we have seen, joked about their tawny faces, ~~their black complexions~~ and sunburnt countenances as impediments to their marriage prospects, in highly-subjective, affectionate family letters composed for their mothers and sisters. Colonial women on the other hand, were noted for their cultivating of ghostly white complexions, in yet another gender inequality between male and female experience. John Stewart was back in Britain from India at the start of 1781, where he provided his brother William with a retrospective account of Madras: 'The Publick walks in the evening are much crowded & more brilliant than any round this Metropolis [London], but the women are walking shadows; the roses, in that country, soon fade in their cheeks, nor do they like the French as I think they ought supply that defect with paint.'⁶¹ Painting the face was the province of women by means of cosmetics and of painters by way of portraiture. The intimate link between cosmetics and paint was both metaphorical and literal, since the ingredients for cosmetics and for artists were often the same.⁶² His letter introduces a national dimension, in the reference to French women for whom cosmetics were an integral part of their subterfuge and who habitually applied too much rouge to their artificially-blushing cheeks.⁶³ In the novel *Hartly House, Calcutta*, (London, 1789), the sixteen year-old Sophia Goldborne accompanies her recently-widowed father, the Captain of an East Indiaman, on a voyage to India. In one of thirty-nine fictionalised letters addressed to Arabella from Calcutta, she writes:

'so great an enemy to beauty is this ardent climate, that even I, your newly-arrived friend, am only the ghost of my former self; and however the lily has survived, the roses have expired: neither my lips (the glow of which you yourself have noticed) or cheeks are much more than

⁶¹ 15 January 1781. NRAS 2654/2/Box 1/bundle 1.

⁶² C. Palmer, 'Brazen cheek: Face painters in late eighteenth-century England', *Oxford Art Journal*, 31.2 (2008), 200.

⁶³ Palmer, (2008), 204.

barely distinguishable from the rest of my face, and that only by the faintest bloom imaginable. Art, therefore, is here (as well as in Britain) a substitute for nature in ninety-nine instances out of a hundred.’⁶⁴

These quotations from the top and tail of the 1780s support [Angela Rosenthal](#)’s claim that whiteness as a visually racial category emerged as an explicit value in the eighteenth century.⁶⁵ The so-called aesthetics of colonialism operated on a gender axis whereby ‘A suntanned complexion was outside the pale, so to speak, of ladylike beauty’ for colonial women in the British empire in both the East and West Indies, while the pallors of their male counterparts embrowned and aged from prolonged exposure to it.⁶⁶ Rosenthal’s essay on *visceral* culture seeks to implicate the body in British portraiture in what she identifies as the ‘processes of fictionalized corporeal animations’.⁶⁷ What remains, considers the process of making faces – of portrait representations in miniatures in which the face is privileged – for a discussion of material culture in empire. That is, in terms of the materiality of the miniature as an ivory object in three dimensions and the faciality of the fictionalised/factual portrait likeness in two.

Materiality/~~F~~aciality

Thomas Ogilvie commissioned a miniature portrait of himself (Figure 6) ~~which is in a Scottish private collection. Executed~~ in watercolour on an oval of ivory and measuring 45 x 35 mm, it depicts the head and upper torso of a man in a three-quarter view to the right against a plain background. It is signed above the sitter’s right shoulder with the artist’s initials J S for John Smart, the date 1786 and an ‘I’ below the date, an abbreviation for India. One of the most celebrated miniature portrait painters of his generation, Smart was in India for a decade from 1785 to 1795, where he was based in Madras [painting the faces of colonial servants and the Nawab of Arcot and his family members](#). [Mildred Archer mentions him](#)

⁶⁴ *Hartly House, Calcutta* (London, 1789), I. 65.

⁶⁵ A. Rosenthal, ‘Visceral culture: Blushing and the legibility of whiteness in eighteenth-century British portraiture’, *Art History*, 27.4 (2004), 567.

⁶⁶ E. A. Bohls, ‘The aesthetics of colonialism: Janet Schaw in the West Indies, 1774-5’, *Eighteenth-century Studies*, 27.3 (1994), 388.

⁶⁷ Rosenthal, (2004), 564.

under British miniaturists in her survey text of British artists in India from 1769-1825, from Tilly Kettle to George Chinnery.⁶⁸ This miniature of Ogilvie was not recorded in the 'List of known sitters' compiled by Smart's⁶⁹ art historical biographer, Daphne Foskett.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, her detailed description of Smart's⁷⁰ technique for working with watercolour on ivory throughout his career conforms to the portrait of Ogilvie with its ruddy complexion executed in a reddish-pink flesh tone for the face. Immediately above his right eyebrow and below where the eye socket meets the cheek, Smart has scraped away small areas of watercolour paint to reveal the translucent white ivory beneath. The tip of the sitter's nose is painted with a tiny dot of opaque white paint which similarly contributes to an illusion of animation.

Foskett's close scrutiny of and informed familiarity with Smart's working technique for miniature portraits introduces a critical *material* dimension to the history of art and empire. If ivory was 'one of the tangible materials of colonialism', imported to Britain from India and Africa as a product of colonial travel and African trade, it is worth exploring its physical properties.⁷⁰ In other words, its material constitution and surface complexion, much as has been done for those Scots in India whose commissions for miniature portraits caused them to comment critically on their own embrowned and antiquated complexions. Ivory was a luxury material and a distinctive one, with the strength and elasticity required for use as a solid material and as a veneer.⁷¹ There were two main ivory carving centres in the Indian subcontinent: at Vizagapatam on the Coromandel Coast near Madras (where Patrick Pringle sat for his portrait) and at Murshidabad in western Bengal; both produced a range of furniture in Western forms, although the former was especially noted for its examples with inlaid ivory work. Miniature portraits in ivory that were produced in India are often favourably contrasted by art historians with their oil on canvas counterparts, which it is said were more expensive to commission, difficult to pack and dispatch and having been dispatched, were

⁶⁸ M. Archer, *India and British Portraiture, 1770-1825*, (London, 1979), 390-393.

⁶⁹ D. Foskett, *John Smart: The man and his miniatures*, (London, 1964), Appendix A, 61-77.

⁷⁰ Rosenthal, (2004), 567.

⁷¹ This section on ivory is based on K. Smith, 'The afterlife of objects: Anglo-Indian ivory furniture in Britain'. *East India Company at Home*.
<http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/eicah/files/2014/07/Ivory-Furniture-PDF-final-19.08.14.pdf>

liable to costly customs duties and warehouse charges.⁷² Canvas was not conducive to the tropical climate of the Indies where it rotted in the damp and was eaten by ants. ‘I think no one can have a proper idea of the plagues of Egypt till they have come here [Christina Pringle wrote to her sister Nora in May 1830]. When I take out my drawing I find little wretches not the size of a comma running over it, and when I open my desk or my book, ditto.’⁷³ The thin cuts of ivory used for miniatures were fragile, but they were more durable than paper or canvas. In order to hold the pigments with which it was painted, the smooth surface had to be prepared with abrasives to make it more absorbent.⁷⁴ Being placed between two pieces of paper and ironed sought to reduce the greasy texture; this, or applying potions of vinegar and garlic, or rubbing the surface with a cuttle-fish bone. Once the pigment had been applied, the painted front was glazed to protect it, although the reverse of miniatures is occasionally annotated with text additionally cautioning, ‘To be kept from Damp & Sun’.⁷⁵ Such long term measures often account for the continued vibrancy of the late eighteenth-century watercolour portrait on ivory, many of which still possess an extraordinary liveliness.

According to Foskett, Smart ‘had an unmistakable gift for catching a likeness, and...the finished portraits undoubtedly represent the sitters with truth and accuracy.’⁷⁶ We have seen that the rendering of likeness was ~~important~~vital to the sitter-subjects of miniature portraits and their ~~absent~~ family members, with Robert Bruce’s judged to be ‘exceeding good’ and at the opposite extreme, Patrick Pringle’s portrait not dispatched to their mother in the Scottish borders on account of its likeness being ‘so bad’. Foskett’s seems a rather counterfeit claim in the absence of any ‘objective controls’ concerning the historical sitter’s appearance, in the

⁷² W. Foster, ‘British Artists in India, 1760-1820’, *Walpole Society*, 19 (1931), 1; M. Archer, *India and British Portraiture, 1770-1825*, (London, 1979), 389.

⁷³ Jessore, 5 May 1830. NAS, GD1/999/1. Christina Pringle was the wife of Alexander Pringle’s second son, John Alexander Pringle. A judge at Jessore, his career demonstrates how successive generations of Scots served in the Indian subcontinent.

⁷⁴ See ‘The Making of Miniatures: Technique and style’, *Masterpieces in Little: Portrait miniatures from the collection of HM Queen Elizabeth II*, (Woodbridge, 1996), 25-38.

⁷⁵ For an example: J. Aronson and M. E. Wiseman, *Perfect Likeness: European and American portrait miniatures from the Cincinnati Art Museum*, (New Haven and London, 2006), no. 30.

⁷⁶ Foskett, (1964), 28.

form of a life or death mask or the tracing of the shadow as a silhouette.⁷⁷ Indeed, [Michael](#) Shortland goes so far as to suggest that ‘even the living presence does not offer an unambiguous source of reference.’⁷⁸ We know from external sources that Ogilvie was thirty-five years old when his miniature portrait was painted by John Smart. The sitter wears his hair in a ponytail tied with a black ribbon; it is white and thinning on the crown of his head; thicker and darker at the side above the ear and in a sideburn that extends to below the ear. His eyebrows are dark; his eyes are a pale green colour with pockets of skin beneath and a mole on his lower right cheek. Ogilvie’s white and thinning hair would appear to indicate a portrait of a man in middle age. His painted skin shows no evidence of the suntanned complexions that his Scottish contemporaries complained about in affectionate letters to their mothers and sisters. And whether we see a face artificially aged by its exposure to the Indian climate is highly subjective. What we can say is that if his complexion has been altered by the same pigments that painted women’s faces, this was not first and foremost an aesthetic decision, so much as an ideological one. The Scot John Adam wrote to his mother from Patna where he worked as an administrator on 3 January 1799, replying to a question in her last letter regarding his height: ‘I am about 5 feet 11 inches in height & much broader & stouter than you would expect - & I am told that I grow broader & stouter daily but shall probably not be much taller – nor do I wish it.’⁷⁹ Once again, the corporeal dimensions of this sprouting Scotsman are provided for his absent mother. More importantly for our purposes at this stage is a letter written some sixteen years later to his father, William Adam: ‘My heart and soul are bent on returning to you, and those I love – and my hopes are generally sanguine, though sometimes my spirit sinks when I think of what I have to do, and how different an animal I must be from all whom I shall rejoin – With the utmost care to preserve ones English ideas and habits, it is impossible to live so long in India, without being thoroughly unenglished.’⁸⁰ In their colonial correspondence to fragmented family members, Scots frequently use English as a synonym for British. A blackened complexion was an unmistakable sign of, as Adam puts it, ‘being thoroughly unenglished’ and one that colonial portraiture was seemingly not prepared to countenance. Mothers and sisters might see their

⁷⁷ E. H. Gombrich, ‘The mask and the face: The perception of physiognomic likeness in life and art’, E. H. Gombrich, J. Hochberg and M. Black (eds.), *Art, Perception and Reality*, (Baltimore and London, 1972), 15.

⁷⁸ M. Shortland, ‘Skin deep: Barthes, Lavater and the legible body’, *Economy and Society*, 14.3 (1985), 300.

⁷⁹ NRAS, 1454/4/903.

⁸⁰ 26 April 1815. NRAS, 1454/4/911.

sons and brothers physically aged and corporeally inflated in their miniature portraits, but to see them indianised as regards their skin colour was a shade too far. This demonstrates how what Kay Dian Kriz's describes as 'the salience of whiteness as a marker of Englishness' in the visual culture of the British West Indies is readily applicable to that of its Eastern counterpart.⁸¹

~~While the majority of the miniature portraits commissioned by his unmarried Scottish contemporaries were destined to be dispatched to mothers or sisters back home, by 1786 Ogilvie was already married and preparing to return to Scotland. In fact, his miniature by John Smart can be seen as marking the termination of his Indian sojourn. The more familiar geographical and social axes on which portrait miniatures in colonial India existed continued into the later 1780s and on into the following decade. With, for instance, Mary Cleghorn writing from Edinburgh in February 1788 to her brother William Yule that 'once you & him [their brother Udney] can afford it, May [their sister] & I is going to beg you will both send home yr pictures — one to each of us for bracelets.'~~⁸² ~~Both William and Udney were serving in India with the Bengal army, since 1781 and 1785 respectively. Into the 1790s, James Campbell, a lieutenant in the Nabob's cavalry at Madras, informed his father, Archibald Campbell, having sent by a third party 'my picture in miniature. it is reckoned a very strong likeness', for his sister Peggy.~~⁸³

In summary, this article has sought to extend the existing art historical study of portrait miniatures. In the first instance, geographically, to the Indian subcontinent as a place, or rather a series of places, of production. In the second instance, socially, on a gendered axis whereby portrait miniatures were commissioned by young, unmarried Scots in India as material affirmations of their survival in a climate initially inhospitable to European

⁸¹ K. D. Kriz, *Slavery, Sugar and the Culture of Refinement: Picturing the British West Indies, 1770-1840*, (New Haven and London, 2008), 186. Romita Ray has written on how 'whiteness crystallised into one of the most powerful signs of European authority writ large within the semantics of Britain's empire' in her *Under the Banyan Tress: Relocating the Picturesque in British India*, (New Haven and London, 2013), 83; see too her 'Baron of Bengal: Robert Clive and the Birth of an Imperial Image', J. Codell (ed.), *Transculturation in British Art, 1770-1930*, (Farnham, 2012), 33-34.

⁸² BL Mss Eur E357/2/146.

⁸³ Mitchell Library, Glasgow, TD219/10/126.

constitutions. Having survived the precarious period of assimilation, these portrait miniatures bear witness to their sitter-subjects subsequent socio-economic progression as they came of age, were promoted in their careers and pursued independent financial status. The miniatures were ~~then~~ dispatched to their consanguineal female kin, their mothers and sisters 'at home' in Scotland to be cherished as possessions and worn as jewellery in the form of bracelets and locket. Many of the dialectics familiar from the existing literature on portraiture have been revisited and recast in the colonial context of the East Indies, especially those of connection and detachment or presence and absence.

Other dialectics have assumed unprecedented prominence in the orientation of our narrative towards the material culture of empire, including life and art, or nature and artifice; surface and depth or complexion and constitution. Portraiture is a 'deceptively accessible genre', writes Richard Brilliant in an account of the limitations of likeness, and this is especially pronounced in the vibrant miniature faces and the tactile palm-sized objects of the genre under consideration.⁸⁴ Elsewhere, Brilliant writes of the 'artificiality of portraiture as a method of packaging individuals in neat containers of personhood'.⁸⁵ 'Neat containers of personhood' is a concise summary of the portrait miniature with its reduced physical dimensions and its proximate focus on the face as a synecdoche. The artificiality that Brilliant discerns is especially pronounced in the portrait miniatures encountered here in the discrepancy between life and art. —with—The stridently whitened or emphatically ruddy complexions of their male Scottish sitter-subjects provides an insistent contrast to the, when ~~the~~ correspondence of their contemporaries with family members which is thick with vivid descriptions of the ravaging effects of the tropics on their sallow pallors and prematurely aged features. With no reliable external data with which to definitively confirm or deny such statements, they remain a fundamental part of the slippery subjectivity or the cosmetic poetics of the miniature portrait within colonial visual culture in the Indian subcontinent in the 1770s and 1780s. s of young unmarried Scotsmen commissioned in the Indian subcontinent in the 1770s and 1780s. If our title is one Latin proverb, Multum in parvo, our conclusion is another: fronti nulla fides.

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⁸⁴ R. Brilliant, 'The Limitations of Likeness', *Art Journal*, 46.3 (1987), 172.

⁸⁵ R. Brilliant, *Portraiture*, (London, 1991), 83.

Figure 1: ~~A Copy~~ after Joshua Reynolds, *Anne van Keppel, Countess of Albemarle*. Oil on canvas, 74 x 62 cm. Private collection, Scotland.

Figure 2: Nathaniel Hone, *Catherine 'Kitty' Hunter*, signed and dated 1780. Oil on canvas, 74.9 x 62.2 cm. The National Trust.

Figure 3: Unknown English (London), Gold-cased ~~London-made~~ watch, second half of the eighteenth century, 50 x 40 mm. Private collection, Scotland.

Figure 4: Unknown Scottish lapidary, Pair of seals, late 1780s, early 1790s. Private collection, Scotland.

Figure 5: Unknown artist, ~~Anonymous~~, *Colonel William Baillie*. Watercolour on ivory, 38 x 32 mm. Private collection, Scotland.

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